CANDID AND IMPARTIAL

STRICTURES

ON THE

PERFORMERS

BELONGING TO

DRURY-LANE, COVENT-GARDEN,

AND THE

HAYMARKET

THEATRES.

DEDICATED TO THAT GREAT ADMIRER AND PATRON OF THE STAGE, HIS GRACE THE

DUKE OF LEEDS.

Animum censoris sumit honesti.

LONDON:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

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DEDICATION.

TO HIS GRACE FRANCIS GODOLPHIN OSBORNE, DUKE OF LEEDS.

MY LORD,

I BEG leave to dedicate to your Grace the following Performance, written for the purpose of investigating the several merits and defects of most of the London Performers, and thereby ascertaining a proper opinion, and the precise extent of their separate abilities. To whom could a publication of this description, avowedly founded on the basis of candour and impartiality, be so well addressed, as to one whose conduct, in every respect, has been uniformly guided by these qualities, and whose patronage of the Drama has been so unboundedly liberal and extensive.

Were I here to follow the dictates of my own inclinations, I should be led into the pleasing task of enumerating the many ami-

able virtues and distinguished accomplishments which your Grace possesses in private life; but as I am convinced, by so doing, I should wound the refined delicacy of your Grace's feelings, I shall of course desist. To attempt it, would also probably lead me into greater extent than is usually occupied in addresses of this kind, and be the means of bringing truth, for the first time, before your Grace in an unpleasant shape. I shall therefore, after apologizing to your Grace for this intrusion, most respectfully retire.

I am,
my Lord,
Your Grace's
most obedient,
and very humble servant,
THE AUTHOR.

26th Sept. 1795.

CANDID AND IMPARTIAL

STRICTURES.

DRURY-LANE THEATRE.

Mr. KEMBLE.

THE town having thought proper to consider this gentleman entitled as a tragedian to a theatrical eminence, more elevated than any other present performer, we shall begin our dramatic strictures with him, although we by no means think that public favour is uniformly a criterion by which merit is to be judged. Whether it be so in the present instance with respect to the person before us, we shall be the better able to determine, when we have examined with an impartial and unprejudiced mind those talents which some few have raised

almost to the same rank with those of the inimitable Garrick.

Mr. Kemble's figure is rather manly than elegant, more suited by its athletic appearance to give us an idea of the sinewy powers of a MARK ANTHONY or a CORIOLANUS, than of the graces and elegancies of modish life. His deportment is uniformly the same, possessing a mechanical stiffness which he cannot throw off, or soften into the least ease or gaiety. He has made several attempts to effect this, but to no purpose. With respect to his countenance we do not think it capable of expressing so much as we are inclined to suppose from the first view of it. We behold features sufficiently large and striking to throw out an expression to the most distant part of the house, but we find them upon examination to possess but little flexibility or power of motion. He has not the art to twist and turn his muscles with that ease and dexterity so essentially necessary in pourtraying the different emotions of the soul. His eyes are large and animating, from which we frequently see those

sudden flashings, those quick and vivid glances that used to dart from those of our English Roscius, and which give such strength and effect to particular passages. Any thing of the *disdain* or *hauteur* he appears to possess a greater facility of expressing than most other emotions. His voice is deficient of many necessary requisites for public speaking. There is an asthmatic huskiness and an insufferable monotony throughout the greater part of it—Wanting those deep, low, mellow tones, which are peculiarly necessary in the delivery of most stage soliloquies, and which were possessed in an eminent degree of excellence by the late Mr. Henderson. Mr. Kemble is compelled to begin his speeches in such a lofty pitch of voice, as in part to do away the manly effect which his herculean person has previously made on the beholder, and thus destroys many a bold and energetic sentence. We think it much better in the pathetic than in any thing else, for in that we have discovered a most happy suspension of the defects we have just mentioned, when we

must own, that hearing what we just before heard, we have been charmed with the contrast.

Notwithstanding the imperfections we have stated under which this gentleman labours, still there is in every thing he attempts, such a vast display of mind, and strength of intellect, as frequently to absorb so much of our attention, as to make us pass many a defect by unnoticed. He possesses in an eminent degree that, which wanting will ever confine a performer within the limits prescribed by vulgar mediocrity, namely, GENIUS, a quality that seems to be a particle of some superior being, filling us as it were with a double soul, and animating us to the performance of deeds that one would think were far beyond the reach of human powers. That he is thus liberally endowed by nature, may be ascertained by attending the representation of any one of his characters, and although we were compelled in conformity to our professions of candour and liberality to point out those impediments in the way of Mr. Kemble's arriving to greater excellence in

the profession than he at present possesses, still, impelled by the same duty, we are forced to admit that he fully deserves the extensive popularity he enjoys, and with all his imperfections may justly be called FIRST TRAGEDIAN OF THE BRITISH STAGE.

Mr. J. PALMER.

THIS gentleman is much indebted to nature for a very fine figure which we think a little injured of late by too great a rotundity of body, and a vulgar stoop in the shoulders. His manners are peculiarly easy and engaging, but by no means those of a man of fashion, a character we could never persuade ourselves to think he fills with propriety. There are certain polished elegancies which the eye feasts on with rapture, but which the pen cannot describe, that ought to be possessed by him who undertakes the public performance of a part of that description. We are not therefore much surprized that but few in-

stances have occurred in which it has been properly supported. Excepting Mr. Barry, and the late Mr. Smith of Drury-lane theatre, we do not recollect one that approached any thing near it.

Mr. Palmer's face is more handsome than expressive; captivating, as the ladies say, in all scenes of tenderness, but incapable of pourtraying those turbulent emotions of the soul which are often depicted by our tragic writers. His eyes possess a languishing softness, when he chooses to call it forth, but not that animation and spirit which are so essential on some occasions. His voice is whining and inharmonious in the upper tones, coarse and grumbling in the lower ones; it is heard to the best advantage in easy chit-chat dialogue in comedy. We have often lamented that this gentleman's private concerns should have been so frequently in such a deranged state as to prevent him from regularly pursuing his profession. Situated as the stage is at present, it would be uncandid in us not to acknowledge him

to be one of its greatest and most essential supporters. We never much admired him in tragedy, if we make a few exceptions, such as *Glenalvon*, *Stukely*, and one or two more of the same level, regular tenor of acting, in which no violent exertion of the voice is necessary. In his tyrants he is most boisterously tyrannical, passing across the stage with such colossial strides, and frequently so out *Herods Herod*, that had we not previously known the contrary, we should doubtless suppose it to be the performance of a country stroller, who had been accustomed to rant and bawl in barns and hay lofts, before an audience composed of gaping rustics. This gentleman ought to break himself of this frequent ill-timed, intemperate violence; a recollection of the following words of Shakespeare one might think would effect it: "*In the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that gives it smoothness.*"

We have been frequently displeased at this

noisy extravagance of acting in many of his tragic parts, but in none more than in the character of *Dionysius*, in that patched-up pantomimic drama entitled the *Grecian Daughter*. Let us entreat him, if he be ever again called upon to sustain this noisy, blustering hero, to have a little more compassion for our ears, if he has none for our understandings.

Mr. BENSLEY.

Mr. BENSLEY's success in the dramatic world, has given the lye direct to the assertion made by many, that the knowledge of the good or bad qualities of the man in private life, does not in the least tend to raise or lower him in the estimation of the town in his public situation. This opinion we have often thought erroneous, and we could prove it in many instances, but the one before us, we think, is sufficient. The amiable and respectable manner in which this gentleman has con-

ducted himself in his private concerns, in a certain degree serves to enlist the affections of the audience greatly in his favor, and inclines them to applaud almost every thing he attempts in the profession. This partiality for the *man*, goes a considerable way to account for the general approbation that attends the *actor* during the whole performance of most of his characters. In a few situations in some of them he is justly entitled to praise; but in no one, in which we recollect him, does he merit throughout that reception he uniformly meets with.—In all, whether *tragedy*, *comedy*, or *farce*, we trace the same *measured step*, the *goggling eye*, and *redundancy of extravagant and aukward action*, that frequently must disgust the most partial of his auditors. His voice is made up of low, drawling, sepulchral tones, that suit better the *ghost* in Hamlet, or the sententious *Malvolio*, than any thing else. It must, however, be admitted, that notwithstanding these defects, we have frequently heard this gentleman deliver dialogue with such propriety of emphasis,

and nicety of discrimination, that plainly evince a sound and comprehensive judgment, to which few on the stage can justly lay claim. In none of his characters is this so observable as in *Prospero* in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and in *Pierre* in *Venice Preserved*. In these we see a mind labouring, as it were, against exterior defects, and frequently so successfully, as to draw down a peal of approbation which our judgment on our return home cannot but sanction and approve of. This is an applause of which a man may be proud, and which outweighs, in value, a thousand of those noisy plaudits that are usually heard in theatres, the remembrance of which in all probability dies away with the clamour.

Mr. BANNISTER, Jun.

WE now come to one of our greatest theatrical favorites.—As the principal motive of these strictures was to see, by a candid investigation, whether each performer

deserved the reputation he enjoyed, we shall immediately begin with our observations on the gentleman before us, and examine with impartiality those powers which for some time past have attracted so much general attention.

Mr. Bannister's figure is by no means a good one for the stage—his limbs appear to be too short for his body; which defect makes him have a kind of *waddling shuffle* in his walk that will for ever prevent him giving us an idea of the fine gentleman.—His action is generally good, and apposite to the sentiment.—His face is, without doubt, the finest on the stage, if we except Mrs. Siddons', of which we shall speak in its proper place. There is no passion that operates in the human mind, but what he can with facility pourtray by his features: they have all the regularity and harmony of form that render them exceedingly handsome, with a flexibility of muscle, and a power of expression, that have never been equalled by any male performer since the days of Garrick. There is a sparkling

animation in his eyes that approaches near to the brilliancy of those of our English Roscius. The movements of the lower part of his face are, if possible, more at his command than the rest. In a word, as far as the human face is capable of expressing internal emotions, can be easily effected by that of the gentleman before us.

His voice is strong and variable, but, we think, frequently too thick and heavy for repeating the easy, sprightly dialogue of common life with that distinct volubility that, which occasionally introduced, create a double force and effect. In this particular talent we never met with an actor that approximated Mr. King, and which was admitted by Mr. Garrick himself. "Write your dialogue," said he one day to a friend, "ever so long and stupid, give it to Tom to repeat, and my life on it he'll carry you through."

We are well informed that Mr. Bannister, junr. has long entertained an opinion that his natural powers, and those which he has

by art at command, are better adapted to the performance of tragic parts than those of comedy. This persuasion is one among a thousand other proofs that actors themselves are the worst judges of the particular line in which their talents are shewn to the best advantage. There is a crooked something in the inclination and disposition of man, that makes him believe he can with facility perform what he is less capable of doing, and those things he is the best adapted for, and the most able to execute, are frequently those he has the meanest opinion of. This defect appears to be ingrafted in the nature of us all, and the actors have at least their share of it. The late Mr. Parsons, so fine a delineator of low humour, equal, perhaps, to any thing the English stage ever produced, fancied himself a tragedian, and often declared he would perform *Richard* or *Macbeth* with any of his cotemporaries. The present Mr. Moody conceives that the town has spoilt him by permitting him to play a certain cast of parts to which he knows himself incapable of doing justice, and that his theatrical ta-

lents incline to the serious. After these absurd notions, it is not a matter of great astonishment that Mr. Banister, jun. should entertain an opinion similar to those we have just now mentioned. That he now occupies the description of parts better fitted to his talents than any other, will not, we think, be doubted by any person in the least acquainted with the bent of dramatic genius.

We cannot conclude with this gentleman without observing, that the great applause he uniformly meets with whenever he publicly appears, frequently hurries him into the most unpardonable liberties on the stage that, perhaps, were ever attempted by any actor ancient or modern. This, error makes him caricature most of his parts, insomuch, that so far from presenting us with a fine picture of nature, we often have from him nothing else but buffoonery, and distortion of feature, such as would disgrace the meanest theatrical booth in Bartholomew Fair. We have been so hurt at this prostitution of brilliant and extensive powers, that it

has been with difficulty we refrained from raising off our seat and quitting the theatre. That a performer so capable of affording us pleasure through the medium of our understandings, should so demean himself by such contemptible practices, we confess ourselves much surprized; but that an English audience should not only permit those liberties to be taken, but highly applaud whenever attempted, is a conduct that has raised our surprize into wonder, and convinced us, that our stage has, in some particulars, dwindled into a state of all others the most mean and degrading.

We trust Mr. Bannister, jun. will take into his consideration the few observations we have here made on the error alluded to, and endeavour, by degrees, to bring down the taste of the town to a proper standard, and the practice of his own inimitable talents within the bounds of truth, nature, and common sense.

Mr. BARRYMORE.

IN coming to this gentleman we confess ourselves to feel a considerable degree of satisfaction. When we have to comment upon talents that have been raised by uncommon pains and assiduity almost to the summit of excellence, the task is peculiarly grateful, and makes us pursue our strictures with avidity and pleasure.

Mr. Barrymore's figure is an extreme good one, possessing sufficient heighth for whatever character he may assume, and of late improved, at least for the stage, by growing more bulky above than formerly. His face, although we cannot say it is so powerful a delineator of the human passions, as the one on which we have just been so lavish in our praise, still is by no means deficient of expression. His voice, we think, for certain tragic parts, is the best on the stage—It has compass to a great extent, clear, harmonious, and variable, but never heard to so little advantage

as in the tender and pathetic. His action appears in general to be too studied, and sometimes falls into the error which Shakespeare alludes to when he says,

" Do not saw the air too much with your hands."

We never had a doubt of this gentleman's exterior powers being equal to any thing in the profession, but we were apprehensive, until lately, that nature had been scanty to him of her internal favours. Our apprehension, however, of this deficiency, we are compelled to say, was illfounded. He has in many instances of late, particularly this summer, in Colman's Theatre, displayed abilities that plainly shewed him to possess a strong comprehensive mind, together with a soundness of judgment not inferior to any performer on the stage. We have discovered these in many situations; but, we think, they are most apparent in his performance of *Zorinski*, in the play of that name, and still more in *Octavian*, in the *Mountaineers*, in which part he called forth talents, that when mellowed by the steal-

ing hand of time, will probably entitle him to a seat among the first actors of the time.

Mr. WROUGHTON.

WE have heard a number of good judges of dramatic talents condemn the performer before us, and place him in a light we by no means think he deserves. His natural powers are, it must be confessed, of a very confined extent, but there is a spirit and pleasantry throughout his general acting, that we always admired, and in some characters appear with such appropriation and fitness, as to bring him very near to excellence. His person is bad, his face inexpressive, but his action and deportment easy and unembarrassed. There is, however, upon the whole, a something about him that makes him respectable in whatever he undertakes, and though we have never discovered, during the number of years we recollect him, any of that strength of colouring in his acting which shews a power and energy of intellect, still he never

disgusts us, and if he seldom towers into greatness, he is sure never to sink into insipidity or dullness.

Mr. KING.

THIS performer has ranked for so many years among the first comedians of the time, and been so often the subject of criticism, in which but one uniform sentiment has prevailed respecting his talents, that, feeling our judgment incline to the same point, nothing new can be advanced by us. His comic powers, by this time, considerably impaired by the great length of years since they were first called into action, were of the very first order. He was always remarkable for possessing, in an eminent degree, and at which we before hinted, a volubility and neatness of expression, much superior to any of his cotemporaries, or, perhaps, equal to any that will ever follow him. His features have an archness that peculiarly fitted him for all the sprightly parts in comedy. His person

is, or rather *was* a good one, for in speaking of Mr. King, we ought to confine ourselves to what he *has* been, not to what he is at present, he having so far advanced into the vale of years, as no doubt, ere long to compell him to quit the mimic world for ever. We always thought his action to have been considerably injured by an awkward stiffness, or an apparent *deadness* in his hands. We have wished this defect to have been remedied, as we do not see but it might have been easily accomplished.

Mr. DODD.

AN actor of the old school like the one we have now left, and when we take a peep into the new one we see such a paucity of good performers, that we lament time is throwing his hoary mantle over most of our old actors, and ere long will, we are fearful, hide them entirely from our sight. In speaking of the gentleman before us, we shall point out in a few words what he *has* been, not what he *is*, as we have just done

with Mr. King. His figure was well adapted to the stage, particularly for personating the fops, in which he shone with superior lustre to any other player within our remembrance. His voice was clear and distinctly flippant. His action easy and unembarrassed. What a number of characters have we seen him sustain, and all with almost equal delight and pleasure. If he excelled in any particular cast of parts, we think it was in the one we have just mentioned, for in them we could never discover any thing wanting. Voice, face, action, deportment, all combined to form every thing the most discriminating critic could wish for. Sorry are we to add, that in a few, very few seasons indeed, shall we in all probability, lose this inimitable comedian, together with his cotemporary in excellence, Mr. King.

Mr. SUETT.

SINCE the death of that incomparable comedian, Mr. Parsons, this gentleman has

with a great deal of assiduity and some policy, endeavoured to make himself acceptable to the town in the performance of most of those characters left unoccupied by the other. A gap was made in Drury-lane company, that required no small degree of merit in any person that would even attempt to fill up. This has been done by the actor before us, and it would be deviating from our principle of candour and impartiality which we hope to preserve inviolate, not to acknowledge that he has been deservedly successful. We cannot, however, but lament, notwithstanding his success, the great falling off from what we have been used to from his predecessor. Mr. Suett's comedy is deficient of that strength and richness of humour so luxuriantly possessed by Parsons. His figure is too thin for its height. His turned-in tottering knees and lathy body, when performing old men, give us more an idea of an aged Spaniard than any other character. He is too fond of distorting his features into grimace, and saying more than is set down for him. His method of delivering

dialogue is however entirely his own, and not in the least borrowed from any other actor; indeed, take him with all his imperfections on his head, he is a pleasant entertaining comedian, and fills his present cast of parts much better than any other performer is capable of doing, in the theatre at which he is engaged.

Mr. AICKIN.

This gentleman we have for a long time considered as a most respectable and useful actor. His person is rather too short and bulky, but does tolerably well for personating the parts in which he is generally seen. We do not know a performer that has kept within the sphere of his own abilities better than Mr. Aickin. The honest sentiment that flows pure and sincere from the heart he always delivers well, and we never wish to see the trusty faithful *Steward*, the tender and affectionate *Parent*, better delineated than he is capable of doing. If he never ascends to greatness, he seldom if

ever goes so low as to disgust you. We confine this observation to his acting alone. His person offended us much when we saw him a few nights this summer attempt the performance of a foreign monarch. Covered as he was with all the cumbersome load of fancied habiliments, the addition to his bulk made him appear not unlike a bear placed upon his hind legs, and gave us, as may be supposed, very little idea of the graces and dignity that ought to belong to a prince.

Mr. MOODY.

VERY little can be here expected to be said of a man who is of late but seldom brought forward before the public, and those few times thought by them too many by the number of nights he appears. There was always a sluggish heaviness, and an insufferable drowsiness in the acting of this gentleman, that threw a tameness over every thing he attempted; lately these defects have grown to such enormity that we

trust his good sense will determine him to quit a profession which, fortunately for him, has filled his coffers with the necessary means of retiring, without giving himself any further professional trouble, or the public fresh reasons for wishing he would give up a post he can no longer hold with credit to himself, and make room for some other actor more capable, or at least more willing to do his duty.

Mr. R. PALMER.

AN actor that has proceeded as far in the profession as he now perhaps will ever go, and further we are persuaded than his merit entitles him. We have occasionally seen him thrust into many of those foppish parts legitimately belonging to the inimitable Dodd, but he has thrown such vulgarisms of face and manner into most of them that have disgusted us almost past bearing. There is a coarseness in his voice that suits more the plebeian than any thing in the smallest degree resembling the gentleman.

He may however be made of use in the theatre, if they will confine him within his proper line of acting.

Mr. WHITFIELD.

WE think this gentleman has not been brought forward in the manner to which his respectable talents entitle him. His person is rather too heavy for the stage, but his action and deportment are in general easy and unaffected, and his voice, though it does not possess much sweetness or melody, still has some variety of tone, and no inconsiderable degree of compass. In his tragedy he is too fond of *mouthing*, and there is a laboured something in his speaking of blank verse, that might pass current in the country, but will not do in town. We are still however of opinion that his abilities deserve a higher rank in the theatre than he has hitherto enjoyed.

Mr. PACKER.

A performer that has been for many years before the public, and by his talents, though moderate, been raised to some notice. This arises from his being respectable in whatever he undertakes. The want of animation and fire has always prevented him from attempting any leading character in the profession.

Mr. KELLY.

WE have often been astonished that this gentleman has been so much noticed by the town; for considering him as a singer, which is the only way we can even mention him here, we cannot persuade ourselves (and we profess to know some little of the science of music) that he has fair claims to that public favour he now possesses, and which he appears to think is justly his due. His voice is dreadfully wanting in sweetness and melody of tone,

and may altogether be considered deficient of almost every necessary requisite that constitutes a good one. With respect to his knowledge in vocal music we think it by no means equal to what the town conceives, The multitude often lay hold of an opinion that considerable pains perhaps have been taken to circulate among them, and when that object is once accomplished, the task is not very easy to oppose it with success. The artifices that have been practised in order to establish for the person before us a fame in the musical world, are well known to a few, and we trust by our endeavours the knowledge of it will be made more general. We hope also to have it in our power by this publication to undeceive the town in whatever false opinion they may have imbibed respecting the drama, and thus bring back their taste into its proper channel, and make it flow with all its former strength and purity.

Mr. DIGNUM.

THIS gentleman's voice has very little resemblance of those notes which generally come from an English singer. His tones are mostly like those of a cracked reed, but possess occasionally a *fatness* of sound if we may so express ourselves, that are certainly in unison with the *doughy* bulk and *flabby* appearance of his person, but are not very pleasing to the ear of a British audience. As far as these defects admit, in tender plaintive airs he is heard with some pleasure.

Mr. SEDGWICK.

THE bold mellow tones of this singer, form a fine manly contrast to those we have just now mentioned, and are peculiarly grateful to the taste of John Bull. The applause they most generally meet with, we think, would be considerably encreased if he would endeavour to

improve his manner, and throw a little more spirit into his acting, if we can so term this gentleman's dramatic attempts. Let us also advise him to *stand still* on the stage a little more than he does at present when he is singing, and we are confident he will *get on* much faster.

Mr. BANNISTER, Sen.

THE many, many winters that have rolled over the head of this veteran of the stage, have not so much impaired his powers as one would reasonably expect. In his time he was much the finest English bass the theatre could boast of, and we have always thought him the best actor we ever saw that established himself as a singer. Indeed some of his comic performances were fraught with humour of the most rich and luxuriant kind, although we never could discover in any of them much display of genius, as their style and manner appeared to us to be in part taken from something before seen.

Mr. CAULFIELD,

LATELY lugged out neck and heels from the shades of obscurity, and excepting his *imitations* we never saw any thing about him that would make us much regret were he to return to his old dingy regions again.

We now come to the female part of the company, and the first person that attracts our attention is the celebrated

Mrs. SIDDONS.

THIS lady has been long considered as a kind of constellation in the theatrical hemisphere. Gifted by nature with requisites for the stage that perhaps in a certain line of acting, were never equalled by any other English actress, she stands forth here an object that claims a first place in the list of our female performers. Much we think cannot be expected of us, res-

pecting this incomparable tragedian, when we say, that in delivering our sentiments on her merit, we should, possessing an opinion nearly similar to that entertained by the public, add but little to their information. We shall therefore state in a very few lines what we think are her particular requisites, in which perhaps we shall vary a little from the general sentiments as to her powers.

Her person is finely form'd for most of those parts in which she has been so pre-eminently conspicuous for a long time. There is a dignity in her deportment when she chooses to call it forth, equal to that so admired by many in the late Mrs. Yates, without approaching to that mechanical stiffness which we always thought discernible in the manner of the last mentioned actress. Her action is in general good, but possesses an apparent study, together with rather too much of the masculine. Her face is finely formed to express *grief*, *rage*, *despair*, *horror*, and all those passions that are most generally pourtrayed in

our tragedies. There is a strong line of expression in her features that commands an audience to the most distant part of the house, and when lessened by distance softens into all the harmony of grace and beauty. Her eyes possess a peculiar brilliancy and animation, and are equally capable of darting forth the fire of rage, or melting into tenderness or grief. Her voice is sonorous and variable, but we think sometimes considerably injured by a kind of whining drawl that has a tedious and heavy effect upon the ear. Her talents, great as they confessedly must be considered by all unprejudiced critics, still are entirely confined within the bounds prescribed by the tragic muse, as she has not one particle of humour, or that gaiety and ease so essentially necessary in those who follow the steps of Thalia. We have seen some attempts made by this lady in comedy, that having been tolerated a second time, has given us the greatest opinion of the easy good nature of an English audience. As a general performer she is nothing, as one confined to a few parts in tragedy much

superior to any thing we have ever seen: We are aware that in delivering such an opinion we oppose that of one of our greatest theatrical critics the late Mr. Colman, who declared to us one night when this lady was performing *Belvidera*, that he thought her *one of the greatest impostors in the profession he had ever beheld.* It is not the high sounding of a name, however great, can induce us to assent to an opinion that our judgment cannot approve of, and we are the more inclined to preserve our own sentiments on the present occasion, when we reflect that this gentleman when prest to give his reasons for making so bold an assertion, by no means delicately worded, declined doing so. Not therefore having heard any thing advanced by him to corroborate the truth of his observation, we are of course left in undisturbed possession of our own thoughts respecting this actress. These having already been delivered, we shall leave her to the full enjoyment of that popularity to which her incomparable tragic powers, we are persuaded, justly entitle her.

Miss FARREN.

A LADY possessing the very first rank in the elegant walks of comedy. Her person, excepting being rather too tall, is peculiarly well formed for the sphere of acting in which she moves, and the inexpressible graces that uniformly attend her deportment, give a luxuriant feast to the beholder, he never receives from any other performer. Her countenance is bewitchingly beautiful, with eyes of the most expressive softness, and a voice distinct, clear, and harmonious. She is in our opinion the only female on the stage, that can give us a proper idea of the real polished woman of fashion, in which she is very little inferior to any other actress within our recollection. Were we to write a volume respecting the theatrical merits of this lady it could only tend to prove her superiority in this line of acting, which the town is already so well acquainted with, that we shall not tire their patience with prolixity of observations, when we cannot make any addition to their information on the subject.

Mrs. JORDAN.

WE come now to a lady that appears of all others to possess the nearest affinity to the laughing muse. Were we here to repeat the many observations that have been made on this inimitable actress by the best critics of dramatic talents, we should go to an extent greater than our limits would admit of. We shall therefore confine ourselves to the one often repeated by that Nestor of the stage *Mr. Macklin*, that *were he desired to point out a female of superior talents from among those who have distinguished themselves on the stage since the beginning of this century, he would without hesitation immediately fix on the name of* JORDAN. This dramatic veteran has also said that the lady before us is a closer imitator of nature than even our English Roscius himself. With these sentiments of so great a judge, and the general opinion being so unanimously in favor of her merit, it would be a most unpleasant task were we compelled by the bent of our own judgment to differ from a sen-

timent so universal. But according with it to its fullest extent, we feel it peculiarly grateful to be able, in conformity to the candour we have professed in the preceding part of this work, and which we trust we have faithfully put into practice, to assent to this opinion of the town respecting the performer before us. She cannot, however extensive as her powers confessedly are, give us the smallest idea of the polished woman of elegance, a character perhaps too sedate for the volatility of her powers. Her person indeed unfits her for the undertaking, being well formed, but by no means cast in an elegant mould. Her face is archly expressive, though not in the least beautiful. In fact she is a kind of theatrical *unique*, if we may be allowed the expression, that whenever we lose we shall despair of ever seeing the like again.

Mrs. GOODALL.

A MOST excellent second to Miss Farren, and we have seen her, but with a kind

of moderate pleasure, sustain a few of those parts that are so finely pourtrayed by the actress we have just now left. This lady's person is remarkably well proportioned, but shewn we think to the best advantage in male habiliments, in which she excels all other females since the days of Woffington. Her voice wants strength, and has a little of the nasal tone that disgusts—Her face is pleasing and tolerably expressive, and her deportment easy, with some grace. She is upon the whole justly entitled to the situation she now enjoys in the theatre.

Miss POPE.

A DRAMATIC *vestal*, do not doubt us, sceptic reader, at near the age we should suppose of *fifty*, and of talents pleasing, lively, and highly comic. Her person bad, but made more so of late by its encreased corpulency. Her face not much engaging; and her voice bawling and unmusical. For all these defects, she has deservedly had possession of the town for

many years. Having gained a sufficient competency to enable her to recline upon the lap of plenty and comfort, the remainder of her life, we hope she will soon retire from the stage, and make room for some other, perhaps of equal, if not greater pretensions to public notice.

Mrs. POWELL.

THIS lady is of considerable service in the theatre. Her person is exceedingly good, her voice strong and variable, but we think she should never attempt any thing in the tender or pathetic. Her action possesses too much nerve and energy for a female performer, and her deportment is deficient of ease. We are still however of opinion that she justly merits the portion of fame she enjoys.

Mrs. P. KEMBLE.

A LADY of no great advantage to the drama, in whatever light we consider her:

her person tolerable; her action and deportment stiff and formal; her face thought by some pretty, but has always to us the appearance of her having been just tasting *a lemon.* We can only impute her situation in the theatre to the interest of which she was of course in possession.

Mrs. HOPKINS.

ONCE a very useful actress in her line; but at present on the decline; not in person, good reader, as in that particular she blooms with all the *full* perfection of *nineteen stone.*

Mrs. CROUCH.

A MOST delightful singer, but considerably decreased of late in power, by what means we know not. There is a plaintive, heart-felt tone in this lady's voice, that we never heard from any other singer since the late Mrs. Sheridan. Her face is, or rather

has been beautiful, for of late it is puffed up with bloated flesh, and her person possesses the same appearance of unsound encrease. Altogether respecting this performer, we are thrown into a state of melancholy, when we reflect *what we have seen, seeing what we see.*

SIGNORA STORACE.

A MOST charming scientific singer.—Her person clumsy; her face coarse and ordinary; and yet there is so much enchanting vivacity, and, to use the language of Sterne, so many *nameless excellences* about her, that she always delights whenever she appears.

Miss LEAKE.

A BEWITCHING little syren, and a very pretty actress, as well as a sprightly, agreeable woman. Her person low, but pleasing; her manners engaging and un-

embarrassed. We think her a most excellent second to the one we have just now left.

Mrs. BLAND.

A GREAT and deserved favorite of the town. She pleases you with her singing perhaps more than a much finer vocal performer. Her person low and heavy, made worse by a gait approaching to the *waddle*. Her action peculiarly appropriate to whatever she delivers, and to the usual archness of her songs. She, in our opinion, possesses very considerable merit, not only in her musical powers, but in those of her acting.

Miss DE CAMP.

THIS lady has made a rapid progress of late in the favor of the town. Low and unpatronized in her origin, she appears to be indebted to her own talents

and assiduity alone for the enjoyment of her present theatrical respectability. Her person is exceedingly good; and her action in general graceful; but sometimes, in apeing the manners of the Italians in her singing, has an appearance of affectation. She will never do much more than she has already done as a vocal performer; and we think her forte in acting lies in a certain cast of sprightly parts in genteel comedy.

We shall now conclude our strictures on the performers of Drury-lane theatre; the intended limits of our work not permitting us to extend them further. This restriction as to space has made us, no doubt, pass over many a dramatic flower unnoticed, that, if taken from the shade of obscurity, and cherished in the sunshine of public favor, would probably expand into all the bloom of excellence.

COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

Mr. HOLMAN.

IN the manner the stage is at present supported, Mr. Holman ranks, no doubt, among the foremost in dramatic fame. His person is well formed, manly, and elegant: would his gait and manners were conformable; but in the first there is an unpardonable roll from one side to the other; and in the last, a seeming studied stiffness, that is uniformly the same in every thing he undertakes: there is also a continual haughty erection and toss of the head, that he practices in most of his characters;—this may do well in the proud, hot-headed, imperious *Hotspur*; but is absurd and ridiculous in the *whining*, love-sick *Romeo*, or in

the blubbering and affectionate *Jaffier*.—This gentleman possesses a very handsome countenance, animating and expressive: which is considerably heightened by brilliant and sparkling eyes. There is a deficiency in the length of his upper lip, that continually exposes his teeth to the audience; which defect occasioned the following whimsical observation, made one night by a gentleman in the pit—"that Mr. Holman's head painted would make a most excellent sign-post to a dentist." We think Mr. Lewis would be a most powerful competitor with him for this palm of distinction.

Considering, however, this performer in whatever light we choose, we cannot say but that he has great requisites for the stage. His mind is powerful, and gifted with that divine quality called genius, without which no actor can ever be great, or indeed reach a sphere beyond that prescribed for those who grovel in the path of insipid mediocrity;—yet Mr. Holman, as if instigated by a determination to stem

the current of natural abilities, and perversely oppose their expansion into excellence, is always endeavouring to do what the situation does not require should be attempted, or what Nature is shocked at when done. An ardent wish to deliver passages in a manner different to what has been ever offered to an audience before, frequently hurries him into a singularity of expression that has nothing but its oddity to attract attention, and often when a plain, simple mode of delivery would best suit the meaning, and give sufficient graces to the beauty of the sentence. An intemperate violence is also frequently practised by this gentleman, accompanied by an extravagance of action that often inclines us to risibility. He has likewise a method of hurrying over the latter part of a sentence, as if to give it more effect, but in reality destroys the intention and solemnity of the scene. These defects ought to be studiously avoided as so many excesses that often mar the meaning of an author, and injure acting which otherwise would be deservedly and generally applauded.

Mr. POPE.

THIS is an actor that we confess has lately grown in our estimation. His person is shewy and well formed, but has not a manly appearance. His face possesses a harmony of feature that prepossesses you much in its favor at first sight; but wanting expression, we are palled with a sameness and uniformity of look during an evening's entertainment.—There is a mellow richness in his voice superior to any other performer on the stage, but our ear is often offended by a *swell of utterance*, and a similarity of tones at the end of each period, that often destroy the spirit and energy of a sentence. His action and deportment are in general easy and graceful; and yet he gives us but little idea of the polished man of fashion, a character, as we before observed, we have but seldom seen on the English stage. We think this gentleman altogether, however respectable his talents may be considered, has been lifted into a professional eminence which he is

incapable of sustaining in a manner that a British audience, from their liberality in the support of the drama, are entitled to expect; and yet so miserably deficient are we at present of that first rate theatrical merit which existed in the days of Garrick, that we do not know where to better ourselves, were we inclined to set out upon the search.

Mr. LEWIS.

IN every thing this performer undertakes, there is such a sprightliness, so much unabating spirit and vivacity, that we are not in the least surprized he has gained such possession of the town.

Mr. Lewis's person is elegantly formed above; but badly limbed, being knocked-kneed, and the calves of his legs placed so high, and falling so abruptly off below into the small, as to incline us to think they are manufactured by mere mortal journeymen, and that not well, they imi-

tate reality so abominably. His face is composed of gay, laughing features, finely adapted to most of the sprightly parts in genteel comedy. A continual exhibition of his teeth sometimes serves, in a great degree, to injure a sentiment in the delivery, and unfits him for the performance of any thing in the serious. His voice is thin and high toned, and there is a *whining, piping* strain in the upper notes of all, that is very unpleasant. There is also in his attempts at volubility an indistinct *gabble*, that deprives many a sentence of its proper force and effect. It would be well if this gentleman would correct a disgusting method he has got of moving his head in regular motions like the pendulum of a clock, and that fixed stare which sometimes approaches to the *squint*. Notwithstanding these defects, we can see him with great pleasure in most of his parts in comedy; and we think the stage will experience a great loss, whenever it is deprived of his assistance.

Mr. HARLEY.

A PERFORMER of great assiduity and no inconsiderable degree of merit. His person too short, but well proportioned. His action wants variety; and there is a hardness in it that resembles much the same defect in the late Mr. Henderson, a gentleman he always appears to have in his mind's eye. His voice is, in most of its tones, good, but wanting in sweetness and harmony of expression, and possesses not one strain of the tender and pathetic. There is an inflexible something in his features that he cannot throw off, and which suits well the flinty countenance of a *Richard*, or a *Shylock*, but is little adapted to the grief-worn, parental visage of a *Lear*. We think this gentleman's abilities ought to be better directed than they have been of late. His comedy, into which he has been occasionally thrust, is in our opinion insufferable, not having, to adopt an expression first made use of by our English Aristophanes, *one morsel of the green fat about him.*

Mr. MIDDLETON.

AN actor possessing a harmony and sweetness of voice that resembles more the strains which used to flow from the lips of the all persuasive *Barry*, than any we have heard since his time. Like his also we are satiated with too much sweetness and palled with a repetition of the same flowing sounds. It has none of those strong energetic tones which composed the whole of the late Mr. Henderson's voice, and which in Mr. Middleton's would add a richness and variety that would far exceed any thing we now have in the profession. Allowing thus much to this gentleman, and so much we think is his due, we do not know what else about him to commend. His person good in other respects, is considerably injured by his knees turning inward, a defect of all others the most disgusting in a performer. His face is very little adapted to the stage, being wholly inexpressive, and sometimes made frightful by his endeavouring to throw an animation into his eyes that are deficient

of every power but that of *squinting*. His action is nerveless and effeminate, and his deportment possesses that studied mechanism we would expect to meet with in the hero of a country theatre. This gentleman can never rise higher in the profession than he is at present, and to retain the possession of that station, he will be indebted more to his voice than to any thing else.

Mr. QUICK.

THIS long deserved favourite of the town is, we are sorry to say when writing this, so much indisposed that may, probably, be the means of compelling him to suspend for a time the pursuit of his profession, if not to quit it for ever. His comic talents are purely original, and though not richly fraught with a mellowness of humour, still possess a certain quaintness and whimsicality, that prove such incentives to laughter that the most cynical disposition cannot withstand their influence—yet we think he wants a variation in his mode of

playing, as we see in every character he assumes, a sameness of deportment and action, and hear the same oddity of voice, which, though peculiarly droll, and, perhaps, not inapposite to the part, still lessens the merit of the actor. A performer should be a kind of Proteus, and change his manner and whole appearance so much with his dress, as scarcely to leave it in our power to identify the man. Possessed of such talents he rises of course still higher in our opinion than he otherwise would, and approaches nearer to perfection.

We sincerely wish that this gentleman may experience a happy return of his former health and spirits, and thereby be enabled to resume once more a station in which we are confident no other performer could fill with equal deserved success.

Mr. MUNDEN.

A PERSON that succeeded the late incomparable Edwin in most of his favourite characters, and was so well received as to

have established himself in the possession of them, must be, one would reasonably suppose, a performer of the very first rate abilities. In opposition, however, to an opinion that appears to be pretty general, we will venture to assert, allowing Mr. Munden a considerable portion of talent, that he is advanced to an eminence to which he is not entitled, and from which he will, perhaps, one day or other fall to make room for some other person more deserving the exalted theatrical station he enjoys. We do not, however, from this mean to insinuate that he does not deserve a respectable rank in the profession, but not that elevated one which he fills at present.

His figure is vulgar and heavy, and from its apparent strength, destroys the effect of his endeavours to give us an idea of the feeble, decrepid old man, or of the airy, fantastic would-be coxcomb. His action is hard and deficient of variety. His voice strong, and face expressive, but he is too fond of grimace, and in almost every thing he performs, outsteps the modesty of nature. We see less of this in his clowns than in any other cast of parts.

Mr. FAWCETT.

THIS gentleman is, in our opinion, the best substitute for Edwin since his time. His person, by its heighth, is well suited to most of the characters he sustains, and his voice, abating a kind of snuffle, is also appropriate. He approaches very near as a burletta singer to the above performer, and we think much his superior in the delineation of artless simplicity, in which Mr. Fawcett throws in a certain characteristic naivetè of expression, that we never saw exceeded by any other actor. Upon the whole this comedian is a great acquisition to the profession, and justly merits the public favour of which he is in possession.

Mr. JOHNSTONE.

INFINITELY the best Teague on the stage. In this line of playing he stands himself alone. His person is of the true Hibernian cast, no way exceptionable, but

in an unfortunate *gummy swelling* about the ancles, that compells him almost constantly to wear boots. His face is manly and handsome, and his action easy and agreeable. His merit in singing is entirely confined to the Irish ballads; and as to private concerns we have no business with them.

Mr. HULL.

THIS gentleman has long enjoyed a respectable rank in the theatrical world in personating old trusty *Stewards*, and parts that require an apparent honest sincerity of expression, such as flow at once from the heart. In these characters he has been often seen with pleasure. Time has long whitened his locks, and would fain advise him to quit the bustle of the mimic world, but the veteran appears to be still determined to hold his place.

Mr. MACREADY.

A USEFUL actor, but frequently pushed beyond what his powers are capable of supporting. He has a most insufferable roll in his deportment that he ought to correct; and——we were going to point out some other defects, but as in doing so, we might probably be led into a greater extent than our limits would admit of, we shall here conclude with this gentleman.

Mr. DAVIS.

A SERVANT of all work, tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, all suit alike his multifarious powers, for in all he is *equally excellent.* He is a kind of a theatrical *pack horse*, load him ever so much he will never complain, but bear all patiently, submit to whatever drudgery you may put him to, and what is of considerable consequence, he is not in the least expensive in his keep.

Mr. BERNARD.

A PERFORMER of merit in many parts. His coxcombs are tolerable, but not so good as a London audience ought to expect. He has been too long accustomed to a strolling life for us to think he would be ever able to rid himself of the many bad habits he has about him, so that we shall not begin the tedious task of enumerating them.

Mr. ROCK.

A GOOD second to Johnstone in the Irish characters. The more low and vulgar, the better adapted to the genius and manners of the man.

Mr. INCLEDON.

THE person before us has certainly the first voice of any male English singer on

the stage—Clear, mellow, and extensive in its tones, it is capable of executing almost any piece of vocal music. His forte is evidently in the plain English ballads; and the sea songs, which have always been peculiarly grateful to a British ear, were never better sung than by this gentleman. The less we say of his acting powers the less cause he will have to blame our freedom of observation.

Mr. RICHARDSON.

A USEFUL singer, but can never approximate to any thing like excellence.—A better actor than the other.

Mr. BOWDEN.

THIS gentleman's musical powers will always entitle him to a respectable rank in the theatre. His acting—"*No more of that Hal if thou lov'st me.*"

Mr. TOWNSEND.

ANOTHER singer, but of less merit.

THE remainder, like grass, escape the scythe by being too low.

WOMEN.

THE first that attracts our attention is

Mrs. POPE.

THIS actress has stood her ground in the theatrical world among the first performers for these many years past. Her person is shewy, her face pleasingly expressive, and her voice clear, though not very harmonious. There is a studied stiffness about her action and deportment, that may be uniformly seen in every thing she attempts, and which, to us, always made this lady disgusting in her public situation. In her tragedy she is insufferably mechanical, and in her comedy she apparently takes too much pains to give us a proper

picture of unaffected sprightliness. Upon the whole, however, as the stage stands at present, she is certainly an object to a manager. How long this will last, ask old father *Time*.

Mrs. ESTEN.

A LITTLE enchanting made-up manufactured piece of elegance. Her person slender, and, to the eye at a distance, appears well proportioned, though some ill-natured folk have been so impudent as to say, that there is a little twist in the hip, that inclines to the *crooked*. Her deportment and action uniformly pleasing. Her countenance bewitchingly beautiful, with eyes of the most languishing softness. Her voice plaintively monotonous. We shall place her next to Miss Farren in the elegant walks of comedy.

Miss WALLIS.

THIS lady, pushed upon the town as a luminary of the very first brilliancy, pub-

lic curiosity was naturally raised to its utmost on her appearance last season at Covent Garden Theatre, but ere many nights had elapsed, the dazzling light of this dramatic constellation became less powerful, and the eye could with greater ease dwell upon the object, and discover what were these extraordinary talents of which so much had been said. An investigation soon convinced the discerning few, that the whole was a theatrical cheat, at least, comparatively to what we were at first taught to believe. The patronage of an exalted and dignified character, it was arrogantly thought, would be sufficient to make her pass current, without the public having the boldness to appeal to their judgment, to see whether they could give her, with propriety, the sanction of their own approbation. But the town quickly exercised their old, noble, and manly prerogative of thinking for themselves, and in a short time reduced the lady, in their own estimation, to a standard to which her merit entitles her. Her person is elegantly formed, and her manners pleasing. Her

voice clear and articulate, and her face handsome; but there is a something of the *vixen*, expressed in her eyes, which are otherwise good, that is by no means pleasing to us. She speaks dialogue tolerably well, and may be considered a useful second rate actress; but to place her in the same rank of elegance with the inimitable *Farren*, is not only to injure her, but insult the good sense of a British audience.

Mrs. MATTOCKS.

IN our opinion, an unrivalled performer in a certain line of acting, and the best of all good speakers of an epilogue, Her deportment is considerably injured by a buckram mechanism in her walk that is extremely disgusting. Her face, likewise, is sometimes made disagreeable by an unmeaning stare, and an exhibition of teeth and gums, that approaches to the frightful. These abominable practices ought to be corrected, if for no other reason than for fear of terrifying the children in the boxes, or occasioning an accident to some female auditor labouring under certain delicate sensations.

Miss POOLE.

IF we are not greatly mistaken, this lady will rise to the heighth of her profession.—There is a certain native modesty in her manners, that prepossesses you greatly in her favour, and which form a fine contrast to those we shall shortly mention. Her voice is harmonious, her face engaging, and her person finely proportioned. We sincerely wish her as much success as her public talents and private worth justly deserve.

Mrs. HARLOWE.

THIS lady is as capital in her way as Mr. Davis in his—Serious, comic, or operatic parts, are all the same to her, in the whole of which she uniformly displays a most happy self-possession, which sometimes approaches *a little too much to the impudent.*

"O modesty what a charm art thou."

Mrs. MARTYR.

AN entertaining warbler and a sprightly performer. She has an archness of features that are peculiarly pleasing. There may be said to be as much *modest assurance* about this lady as in the one we have just now mentioned, but we think it becomes her better than the other, and consequently does not disgust us so much.

Mrs. CLENDILING.

A SWEET singer with a tolerable person, and pleasing countenance. The least we say of her acting the better.

Mrs. MOUNTAIN.

A PRETTY singer with an engaging regularity of features, and easy deportment. There is a melancholy lack of spirit through the whole of her acting.

We shall now drop the curtain of Covent Garden Theatre, and raise that of Colman's. As many of the principal performers who are engaged in the summer by this gentleman, belong to the winter houses, and are already mentioned by us, we have of course but a few remaining to notice here, and the conciseness of our observations on them shall be in proportion to their several merits.

Little Theatre, Hay-Market.

Mr. WATHEN.

AN humble follower of *Edwin*, but keeps himself at a respectful distance. He is always comical, but strange as it may appear, but seldom makes us laugh. We think it would have been better for himself and family had he retained the cockade.

Mr. C. KEMBLE.

A RISING young actor, but with some natural defects that will ever prevent him from being a great one. He has more ease and sprightliness when he chooses to call them forth, than all the rest of the family put together.

Mr. BENSON.

THE worst actor that, perhaps, ever insulted an audience in the respectable line of playing in which he has been of late thrust upon the town. Would you believe it Mr. Reader, that we saw this man attempt the performance of *Glenalvon* in the tragedy of Douglas, and many other parts of almost equal difficulty. In the course of our theatrical experience, we never met with a more complete mutilator of blank verse than the gentleman before us.

Mr. WALDRON.

RESPECTABLE in old men, where no humour is necessary, not one atom of which has he in his whole composition.

Mr. PALMER, Jun.

We have not as yet discovered much promise in this theatrical strippling. The *black-guard* appears to sit the easiest and best upon him.

Mr. BLAND.

"MUCH better but, a little faint still." Vide *Scrub.*

Mr. BURTON.

A USEFUL stop-gap. "*I never see thy nose but I think of hell fire.*" Vide *Falstaff.*

Mr. COOKE.

A WRETCHED singer, and a worse actor.

LADIES.

Mrs. S. KEMBLE.

A MOST charming delineator of artless simplicity. Her person engaging, her countenance beautifully simple, and her manners pleasing and unaffected. She should never attempt the speaking of blank verse, as there is a drawling tone in her

voice that tires upon the ear, and her person is deficient of that weight and dignity so necessary in those who assume respectable parts in tragedy.

Mrs. GIBBS.

A SPRIGHTLY pleasing actress, and a pretty woman. The thinness of her voice will ever prevent her from playing with effect in a large theatre.

Mrs. BOOTH.

A VERY useful piece of theatrical antiquity.

"It is the rust we value, not the gold." POPE.

Miss HEARD.

THE Printer's Devil is now waiting for the last page, so we are compelled thus abruptly to bring our strictures to a conclusion, conscious of having committed, during the course of our progress, some errors; overlooked, perhaps, many an ob-

ject worthy of notice, yet at the same time trusting that we are entitled to some degree of praise for our candour and impartiality, at least, if not for any thing else. With this conviction on our minds we cheerfully submit our labours to the public, and wait with confidence for their liberal and unprejudiced decision.

FINIS.

FINIS.